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Charles B. Mead A Young Man of Rare Promise



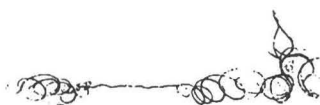
VT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*"Mt. Mountains"
in Mt. Rutland, Ver.*

Spring 1861.

Mead

Scribbles



With pen and ink, schoolboy Charles Mead (1843-1864) recorded
impressions of his world.

Preface

Charles B. Mead was born on 5 April 1843, the son of Andrew Jackson and Ellen Boardman Mead of West Rutland. He was killed during the siege of Petersburg, Virginia, on 17 June 1864. In his *A History of Company F, First United States Sharp Shooters*, William Y. W. Ripley writes:

The Company suffered a severe loss at this place [Petersburg] by the death of Corporal Charles B. Mead, who was shot through the head and instantly killed. Corporal Mead was one of the recruits who joined in the autumn of 1862, and has been constantly with the company and constantly on duty ever since, except while recovering from a former wound received at Gettysburgh. He was one of two brothers who enlisted at the same time, the other, Carlos E. Mead, having been himself wounded. He was a young man of rare promise, and his early death brought sadness, not only to his comrades in the field, but to a large circle of friends at home. ...¹

Angela Hinchey, the editor of this Quarterly, is an art instructor in the Rutland Public Schools. She is a descendant of James Mead as was Charles Mead. While doing family research at the Vermont Historical Society Library, she discovered one of Charles B. Mead's composition books, *The Secretaries Book, of the West Rutland Lyceum, Organized January, 1860* [MSS 28, # 55]. She became interested in learning more about the young man's life story. By a stroke of good fortune, at about the same time, the Rutland Historical Society gained access to two additional composition books of young Mead (*Chas. B. Mead's Composition Book, No. 1* and *Chas. B. Mead's Orations and Essays. Vol II R.U.H.S.*).² The manuscripts were generously made available to the Society by Mrs. Harold G. Tedford, granddaughter of Charity (Mead) Burr, a sister of Charles B. Mead.

These compositions, grammatical exercises and declamations contribute to a better understanding of what it was like to be a young man in pre-Civil War Rutland. The development of this boy's intellect and sensitivity is apparent in his writings beginning with the story of a trip over the Green Mountains composed at age twelve and ending with his growing insights and observations set down at age eighteen. Charles' original spelling and punctuation have been maintained throughout. The meaning of the phrase "For the Budget" remains unknown.



VT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

¹William Y. W. Ripley, *A History of Company F, First United States Sharp Shooters* (Rutland: Tuttle & Co., 1883), p. 186

²R.U.H.S. was the Rutland Union High School.

Charles B. Mead

A Young Man of Rare Promise

Selected and Edited by Angela Hinchey

A Ride Over The Green Mountains

Rather late in the fall for quite a number of days Father and Mother had been promising us a ride over the Green Mountains. The morning that we were going to start Genie and I had kept awake most all night thinking of our ride.

But we thought we were not going we were so impatient that after what we thought was half a century we started about two oclock.

When we got beyond East Rutland a little ways we saw a man who had risen before the Sun.

A mile or two beyond East Rutland we began to ascend though it didnt seem as though we were going up much.

Long before we got to Mendon Village Geney and I were fast asleep.

Beyond Mendon Village we saw a great many saw-mills and large piles of lumber all the way up the mountain and on the top too.

There were alder bushes on the sides of the road so thick that they almost reached into the road.

And the road was so zig-zag that it almost seemed that we went right back the same way that we came and in fact we went every way of the compass.

When we got to the top of the mountain there was a new house not quite finished and they were just eating their breakfast.

While Father stopped the horses to rest them and to see the scenery Geney and I ran into the woods a little ways to get some spruce gum and we were not gone but a few minutes and we got enough for all of us a good cud and Genie said if he lived there he would have all the spruce gum he wanted.

We saw two real American Eagles and they flew right over our heads Genie wanted a gun very much to shoot them.

It was very steep going down the mountains.

At the foot of the mountains where we went over there was a small lake which was the source of the Quechee river. Genie kept calling it Coochee.

We crossed as many as nine bridges over the river in Bridgewater and in one of the villages in Bridgewater we saw a large woolen manufactory and in that village we took dinner about two oclock, Mr. Woodard kept the Hotel.

There are also two or three villages in Bridgewater. We followed Quechee River to Woodstock Village.

It is quite a large village there are several manufactories there a Medical College and a Female Seminary there is a large park very handsomely finished with a good strong fence and paths running through it well shaded with large Maple trees.

The next village that we came to was Taftsville where there is a large manufactory where axes and scythes and most all kinds of edge tools are made which are in our stores.

The Quechee Village comes next and Hartford Village.

The next village is an important Rail-Road Station which is called White River Junction where four Rail-Roads meet the White River empties into the Connecticut River here there are four large bridges here we paid toll at two of them we had a very pretty view of the rivers and bridges.

As soon as we got into New Hampshire we saw a great deal of granite, in Lebanon are considerable many manufactories, we got to the end of our journey of fifty miles about five oclock and we were glad to come to a stopping place and so am I glad to come to the end of my composition.

February 22nd. 1856, Newell Jenney Teacher.



MOORE

The old road over the Green Mountains.

The Atlantic Telegraph

Such is the name of the great enterprise which has just been accomplished. Cyrus W. Field aided by others and by the American and English Government succeeded in laying the Ocean Telegraph. Several unsuccessful attempts had been made previous to the last one but the Company perservered and succeeded.

Cyrus W. Field is a hero greater than a Napoleon, He has succeeded in his great and noble undertaking.

The cable is about the size of a ten cent piece.

It consists of seven copper telegraph wires surrounded by three coats of Gutta Percha, and that enclosed by eighteen coils of wire with seven wires in each coil.

There are one hundred and thirty three wires in the whole cable. When it was first announced in the larger cities of our Union that the Atlantic Telegraph Cable had been laid few believed it, it was so great an enterprise so many failures had occurred that it seemed almost impossible. But when fuller evidence came Europe and America were pervaded with a thrill of enthusiasm.

Public rejoicings were held in almost every village and in the larger cities on more magnificent scales for this one of the greatest enterprises ever achieved by men.

Sep' 21st, 1858

No 6 Magnify Not My Faults

What a queer subject that is to write upon.

I hardly know what to say.

It may be applied to all persons who would have their friends or enemies think not too harshly of them.

There would be less of strife and hard feelings in this world if all would think of that.

It is nearly the case with all to magnify all persons faults.

All should shun it as much as possible.

Impromptu Five Minute Sketch

October 26th, 1858

Faith

To what a great variety of cases may faith be applied.

The weary tired laborer as he turns on his homeward way, thinks of the many trials and privations of his life. He would almost be willing to be down in his grave; but wake up have Faith; the clouds will ere long flee away; the sun will shine forth in all its brightness.

The student in his room as he puzzles his brain over a difficult problem or question feels almost discouraged; but have faith that it can be done, "what man has done man can do again," try earnestly and rightly and it will soon be accomplished.

All great and good men had faith or they would not have accomplished anything.

Cyrus W. Field would not have succeeded in laying the Ocean Telegraph if he did not have faith and try.

Christians in their trials are almost persuaded by Satan to give up trying to do right; but they think of God's promise to man. "be faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life" and continue in their heavenward way.

Therefore all ye weak and erring souls have Faith.

For the Budget

October 15th, 1858.

Skating

Skating is a very pleasant exercise. Many think so too.

I love to go out some pleasant moonshiny evening, with about half a dozen of my companions, and have a good skate.

When I am tired I like to lie on my back and look up at the Moon sailing with all its splendor through the flaky clouds.

Then it is that my thoughts wander to the greatness of the Heavenly Being who planted the Sun and the Moon in the heavens, and all the bright stars and planets, and think how I would like to know what inhabit those bright abodes.

Whether they are like us weak mortals.

What kind of a planet theirs is.

But I am often aroused from my meditations, by the shout of my comrades as they wheel in circles around me.

I then up and away over the smooth glassy ice; the ring of our steel skates making music in our ears; and keeping time to the joyful beat of our hearts.

O who does not love to skate.

If any have never had a real good skate they have never had real joy.

Sometimes we build fires on the ice or on the land near the side of the ice and when we are chilly cluster around it as Indians or Backwoodsmen around the camp fire.

Then snatching brands of fire waving them in the cool evening breeze, if there is any.

And we play all sorts of games too.

For others choose more manly sports if they will, but as for me, "away, away, where the merry skaters be, there is the place for me."

A three five minutes Compo.

Wednesday November 3rd. 1858.

I'll try and I can't

What a contrast there is in those two little words.

One is the incentive to all that is accomplished whether evil or good.

All that accomplish anything say it either in speech mind or action.

The other succeeds in the overthrow of all that is not finished.

I'll try. What a motto that is.

Persons have been spurred by it to the discoveries of hemispheres and the foundation of colonies, kingdoms, and republics.

It has won victory on the field of battle; and in all ways that are traveled by heroism and valor made memorable conquests.

Alexander did not say I can't but pressed boldly forward and succeeded in all that he undertook.

Napoleon thought not of retreating at any critical period of his eventful life, but by skillful maneuvers and boldy pressing forward he succeeded not only in baffling his enemies but in conquering them.

The Americans in the war of Mexico surmounted obstacles almost impossible because they would try.

I can't in the words of another is a cheap shuffling excuse for wrong doing and doing nothing at all.

And very true that is too. Many would accomplish that which they think almost impossible if they would only try but a little; but the I can't persuaded them that it is easier to do nothing.

Thus it is why so little is succeeded in.

I can't is the worst word in the English Language; it ought to be blotted out from it and its dictionaries while I should stand out in "bold relief" and be one of the guiding stars of our existence.

For the Budget

November 13th 1858.

Courage

Courage is a very desirable acquirement.

It is of various kinds.

The courage of the battle-field where men are rushing in the very face of fiery death is something, but is often goaded on by hope of reward, glory, and honors and yet oftener still by recklessness of life laboring under misfortunes.

Manly courage is always desirable.

For in contact with the world, loss of property and friends it is often brought into requisition.

But in many cases it is assisted by moral courage which above all the other kinds of courage is the most desirable.

When persons possessed of moral courage are bowed under misfortune then it is that the strength of it is fully seen.

Though it bends them like the "reed before the blast" but when the storm is past they rise and are comforted, triumphing in that their God "doeth all things well."

For the Budget

December 17th, 1858.

II Book of Chronicles

Chapter I. And it came to pass in the reign of Benjamin that the people from the East and from the West came to hearken unto his words.

And as they gathered themselves together in the Temple of Science he did teach them from his mouth with exceeding great wisdom.

And he did teach the young men concerning the laws of hieroglyphics called figures.

He spake unto them and they hearkened unto the words of his mouth and did receive much knowledge thereby.

And after that the young men got up and did speak concerning the words of the law.

First came John whose surname was Monahan and he did speak boldly and well.

Next came Eugene of the tribe of Mead [Mede] and spake the words of the wise.

After this came Araunah son of James and he did speak of the time when persons called bachelors were sold as sheep and he spake in a strange tongue which much delighted the people.

Next Frank a man from the North and of much wisdom.

Then came Perceival a man of small stature and he did speak like unto a man of sence and the people were much delighted with his words in as much as they praised him exceedingly.

And many other young men did dispute concerning the words of the law with great and exceeding knowledge therein.

After this there came forth a young man and woman and they did stand before the people with parchment in their hands and they did read the words of wisdom contained therein.

After these came forth an aged man and woman inasmuch as her sight was dim and his hair was white.

And they did converse together with seeming joy when all at once the woman did get wroth and she continued to wax more and more wroth till she did drive the face of that man from out the Temple of Science into the porch thereof, and the people in the Temple did laugh and spat their hands and stamp their feet till the noise thereof was heard unto the uttermost parts of the Earth.

For the Budget

December, 1858.

DECLAMATION

Thought

One of the most wonderful of man's faculties is that of thought.

By it he can revert to scenes in his own life long since gone by; by the aid of books he can see the world as it was centuries past. He can view each era in its history, and as his mind travels back to the time when other generations of men inhabited this globe, he is lost to all present realities; his soul is wrapt up in visions of the past, his thoughts wander up to the great Author of all in gladness that he is permitted to see such splendid visions, that he should be invested with such a glorious gift as that of thought.

He can picture to himself scenes transpiring all over the world. He can in the shortest space of time travel to the most remote parts of the world and observe scenes as though he were there and they were actually present to his senses.

He travels forward to the time when all things earthly shall be as naught; he even tries to stretch his mental vision to its utmost tension in order to comprehend a boundless and a never ending Eternity.

January 8th, 1859.

GRAMMAR EXERCISE

A Geranium Leaf

I perceive by sight that it is of a green color, though of the lightest shade on the under side.

It has veins or branches which extend all over it, they are indented on the upper side and raised on the lower side.

It is also covered with a fine down which is of a brown color.

I do not think that its taste can be described only that it tastes like any herb, some like a spear of grass, some like its taste - I do not.

There are over fifty kinds of geraniums.

Description of an object by the two senses Sight and Taste.

January 17th, 1859.

GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Mountains

Mountains gather the moisture from the clouds and feed the rivers which fertilize the Earth.

They hold in Europe the vast glaciers which afford a never failing supply of water to some of the most extensive European rivers.

They improve the healthiness of the climate and afford the most grand and picturesque scenery to be found on the Globe.

Description of the uses of an object.

January 25th, 1859.

The Ocean.

What a variety of events have happened on the ocean.

Great victories have there been achieved, different nations at enmity, enemies, pirates, and great warriors have there met and often received their death wounds; there the bloody struggle, the death gasp, and the agonizing howl of the dying victim contrive at times to make it a scene of wretchedness.

When the death of a loved friend on shipboard occurs then it is that the ocean is indeed a scene of sorrow to the bereaved ones; the tolling of the bell, the service of the chaplain, the stillness of the wind and waves, and when the loved one is borne forever from their sight through the surging blue waves, all add to make it a scene approaching the sublime.

Down in its deep dark depths lie treasures from countless shipwrecks, and animals of unknown sizes and shapes.

Would that my inefficient pen were able to express the glories of the sunrise and sunset at sea, such splendor and magnificence the pencil has never traced; the glow of gold, crimson, and silver twined together in different shades, the dancing of the sunbeams across the crested waves unite in forming a gorgeous picture of nature not witnessed on the land.

The ocean is of much use, it conveys the produce of different climes to others in a speedy manner.

Clouds of vapor are drawn up from it and carried by the winds to fertilize the Earth.

The movements of the waters have caused much careful study and research; they are very interesting to scientific minds.

The coral insects and the many kinds of shells found in the ocean form objects of wonder as are many other things pertaining to the great waters, but my pen is not capable of showing them forth in any degree of excellence.

For the Budget.

February, 1859.

War

Would that the God of war had been dead long ago.

He has produced devastation enough already on mankind.

What a theme it is for the thoughts to dwell upon!

What misery it has caused to fall on persons of all sexes and ages!

It has cost more property and lives than any other unnatural evil of mankind.

It has made more hearthstones desolate; it has caused more hearts to feel the deep anguish of loneliness and that feeling of wretchedness which is beyond the power of words to paint, than the other calamities that belong to the human race.

I repeat it, would that the God of War was dead; would that all traces of his existence were blotted out from the thoughts of men, would that its votaries were few, weak and far between; that every vestige of its existence were swept from the face of the Earth; that all things pertaining to it in any shape or form were silent and dumb as the grave and would ever remain so.

For the Budget.

February, 1859.

Nature

In nature is combined the grand, the lovely, - and so on exhausting the adjectives in its praise.

Here are the beautiful plains covered with luxuriant vegetation; the pleasant valleys lying amid surrounding hills "the abodes of peace and plenty;" the magnificent mountains whose lofty snowy crests are lost amid the fleecy clouds.



E. PURDY

West Rutland and the West Mountains from Boardman Hill in springtime.

On the other hand see the rolling rivers tumbling over rocks forming cataracts then gliding along smooth and unruffled; see the lakes, calm, placid, on whose silvery surfaces are reflected the surrounding objects; the mighty water is carried on the commerce of the world, and where the storm-king revels at will; where the sunrise and sunset forms form pictures "that no pen can paint, no words describe."

Observe the growth of vegetation, the effect which the different seasons produce and the ten thousand other events which show frail man that underneath all, there is a mighty irresistible power, a God who controls and directs the Universe.

September 14th., 1859.

Our Country

Great and vast, are the thoughts which are awakened by the simple mention of those words.

What heart does not swell with joy, and what pen does not strengthen us by an electric thrill, when we mention Our Country, and yet how weak, how inadequate are words to express our thoughts on such a subject.

What a beautiful country is our's, mighty rivers sweeping through the land, carrying our commerce; the sublime Niagara the wonder of the World; mountains presenting scenery beautiful beyond description, and whose lofty snowy crests rise far above the fleecy clouds.

If you would seek for authors; divines, statesmen, heroes, philanthropists who are the most worthy, where would you look but in America?

No nation has ever existed, which has possessed such a code of laws, such an unblemished history.

Though we may be absent in other climes, "still our hearts will fondly turn" to "this land of Hail Columbia, Yankee Doodle, and Pop goes the Weasle."

While other countries may have single arts raised to a nearness of perfection, ours reaches to a high degree of excellence in all.

From the day that the Pilgrim Bark first struck the Rock Shores of the Bay State to the present time, this land has ever been to the World an example of all that is great, good, & just; and were it not for "the damning shade of slavery's curse," which rests as the only foul blot on the fair page of Our Country's history, we should be what we justly deserve and shall yet reach, the height of Earthly genius.

And yet, Our Country even now stands a living monument of greatness; an example to the World of what a country should be.

January 5th., 1860.

Life

What is life?

It is the state of having an existence, of being endowed with organs, possessing changability, and for the human race much more than simply organic existence, growth, and decay.

We, members of the human race, or higher order of animals are possessed of powerful feelings, of an exalted mind capable of great attainments, and of so high a degree of cultivation as to astonish ourselves, and of approaching in some small degree towards that perfection which is possessed by our creator.

This mind or soul which has been given us to use rightfully or wrongfully as we may seem fit, is possessed of such wonderful properties as to be able to exist forever, to never cease its action, and to be continually enlarging itself for good or evil.

Life may be compared to a drama, it has its sorrows and joys, its ups and downs, its excitements and narrow escapes; yet more or less so as its particular sphere is more or less active.

At the beginning of life we are a helpless, driveling, crying baby; depending on others for our necessary support, and our very life even is in their hands.

We pass this period of our existance amusing ourselves by alternately crying, so as to have a healthy development of our lungs, and by stuffing our fists into our mouths, and gazing at anything & everything within our visual horizon.

The next stage of our existance we are toddling about getting into all manner of mischief, then spending the remaining years of childhood in play, as we should thus gradually strengthening our feeble frames for after life; we mimic all the acts of our elders, have our joys and sorrows and think we know everything.

Many looking back upon the days of their childhood wish they could return, & think that their days were far happier and less sorrowful; but it is my opinion as I think it is of some others, that our sorrows were then as great compared to our physical expansion, as those of older growth.

We are then sent to school which we dislike as much as possible, but have to yield to what we think to be a great imposition.

I suppose that in older times, children had besides the prospect of being required to sit still all day on a bench, the additional horror of getting one or more lickings a day, all of course for their good.

As we grow older we are initiated into all the mysteries of games, marbles, playing ball, swimming etc. in summer; and coasting, skating, and all fireside sports in Winter.

In youth we become instructed in our studies, seek the acquisition of knowledge, aspire to be like our superiors & act to some degree like them, often copying their vices.

Life then seems to us just entering to be a pleasant reality.

This is the most critical period of our lives, we are then forming our characters for good or evil, and which will as a general thing remain with us through life, how important then, how perilous a scene of our existance is that which most of us are now passing.

We should steer wide of quicksands and rocks which are at all dangerous, and sail our ships on the sea of life by the most prosperous routes, and the most desirable ports.

At the commencement of active life as a man of the World, many obstacles are to be overcome in the stern current of duty & necessity, which go far to show the real strength of heart, energy of purpose and capabilities for success in life.

Once launched on the sea of active life, man is influenced in a high degree by the different passions, stimulated to put forth all his energies by his approach in the circle of their attraction.

It is then that man aspires for military glory, for honor and for exaltation above his fellows.

As has been said, we live in a fast age, we pass our lives from beginning to end, all is done in a hurry; no one who is slow will be anywhere near this march, - the double-quick time of modern events,

From middle age, man is continually though perhaps almost imperceptibly retrograding; till at last he silently passes from the land of the dead, to the land of the living; unremembered in a few short years, save perchance by a few faithful hearts, who soon as silently pass from Earth.

There if he has reached one of the higher rounds on the ladder of fame, his name and fame may live; but the memory of all will sooner or later be as an extinguished spark.

Life has been compared to a ship, a book, the drumming of a partridge, the seasons, a journey, and to many other things, but all are inadequate to express in its full sense the true meaning of the term life; nor is mortal capable of showing all its reality by the use of feeble words.

When we can look back through the "dim vista of years" passed, may there be few things to regret.

And when we have passed innumerable and now incomprehensible years in the next-world, we shall look back to this life as but a drop in the ocean of time, then we shall just begin to know something of the reality and meaning of the term life.

March 1860

Dreams

How quiet and varied are our dreams.

They come when they please and stretch the imagination into the strangest vagaries.

Our thoughts then seem to scorn all control, and like a colt let loose from the confinement of a stable, or a schoolboy whose wild spirit despises the closeness of the schoolroom rush into tenfold greater wildness and uncontrollable recklessness.

So our thoughts in dreams, break loose from all confinement and rush into the strangest and wildest fancies, scorning reason and sense, and with a wild leap land us into the midst of wonders greater than those produced by Aladdin's Lamp.

Dreams are sometimes the certain forerunners of events, but this has never been my experience.

They are often too the realization of our dearest hopes and desires, and we see pictured into reality that which we may have desired, and on which we may have built many airy castles.

Once, belonging to a Temperance Society, I dreamt that I drank a glass of cider in a deacons pew at church.

At another time I saw a solution of that passage in the Bible, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the

kingdom of Heaven; I saw a needle so large that a camel actually passed with his rider through the eye of it.

Thus do our thoughts let loose from the confinement of reason, travel to the utmost of the real & soar far into the ideal, and despite what Solomon says of there being nothing new under the Sun, are continually showing something new under the Moon.

They like the freaks of nature, are the freaks of a wonderfully imaginative mind.

April 3rd., 1860

DECLAMATION More Light

"More Light," said the dying Goethe, as the feeble light of this earth was fading, and the dazzling pure light and transcendent glories of heaven burst upon the Philosopher's closing eyes.

All through his life his deeds were but the exemplification of his last words. In literature, science, philosophy, and wisdom, he rose as surely as though "More Light" was the load stone of each.

A better motto could not be found in our language for those advancing in any science or sphere of life.

"More Light" is uttered by the earnest students of various sciences as they delve deep in search of some new principle, and among things as unknown to most, as the productions of the alchemists subtle brain.

"More Light" is more than the mere nominal part of all the deeds of life. In childhood information is sought, and the opening why unbars the gates of, and lets in upon the growing mind a wealth of knowledge. "More Light" says the student and youth, as with an increased curiosity and desire to know, he seeks out further knowledge and traverses unknown paths in all directions. Faster and denser fall the rays of light upon him, and manhood finds him advancing with a sturdier but not less zealous ardor. He has realized something of his anticipations from following his motto, and can look back with pleasure on the right road traveled. He can give to fellow travellers of his rich knowledge which will enable them to go forward in the same direction. "More Light," he has advanced far upward, yet he as earnestly "breaths from his heart the fond wish of the past" destined never to cease.

When this globe was poised in the air ready to be beautified, the first mandate of Jehovah was, "let there be light," and as the earth was enveloped in this the highest gift, so were the words of the dying German by the "guiding star of our existence," bathe our minds and hearts with its brightness, cleanse us within, and as from the beginning of life it has sent its rays with more or less intensity - so may they increase while unending ages shall roll over us, and our souls be pervaded with light from the Source.

August 25th., 1860.

West Rutland, Vermont
October 21st 1000 + 800 + 60

Charles W. Peck Esq.

Dear Sir:

No, not so, my dear old friend Charley; how are you? I received your letter noted the 18th on yesterday.

My heart echoes your sentiments in speaking of the death of Hannah.

William Barnes' sickness has not changed much this week. Some of the time we have heard that he was just alive & at other times that he was some better. I think that there is more hope of his living when he does not go down fast. Minnie Daley came near the middle of the week, but has not seen him yet, as they think the excitement would hurt him. He went down to N. Y. to marry her.

Lydia is sick with the same as Wm. though not near as bad.

Brother Johnny has a slight touch of the Quinsy.

Mrs. Bingham is very sick & has been all the week. Some of the time it seemed as though she could not live - she was as white & cold as death; she has been some easier for two days.

I think we never had so much sickness around here before - Dennis Crippen & another scholar are sick; down Clarendon Creek there are some fifteen sick & so all around here - many have died in Hubbardton of Putrid Sore Throat which is almost sure death.

I was but little astonished to hear that you had but one opponent in Barre in declaiming; there are some few in every school who always excell in speaking; how I pity those poor fellows who can never reach that high place of honor; only the smart & brave need ever try, eh, Charley?

I have written another declamation today, it is, American Liberty - the end not yet. It is short but full. Gene wrote one for last Friday eve. about eight lines, but it had the right ring - So had one that Leonard spoke; he did well.

Mr. Bingham has over 60 scholars now - many small ones - what is your number of scholars & teachers? Our debates went down & have not got up.

Dick Morgan taught school some of the time last week & I think that Len or I could have did better - he had unlimited authority - out of the way small fry - I am monarch of all I survey, & he surveys everything. So you would have thought could you have seen him.

I came out of the Sons-of-Temperance last Thursday eve. & H.P.M. followed my example & now we go about "seeking whom we may eat up somebody" 's cider.

It is Sunday eve & a deep stillness rests upon my ear for most of the family are snoring in the soft arms of Morpheus - whither I must soon betake myself.

Charley - as we excel in declaiming so let us strive to excel in every study & right deed - we can conquer, or if not "he who aims at the Sun shoots higher than he who points at the Earth," & we can shoot higher & climb that famous Hill of Science higher than others who try or half try.

Ever your friend

Charley B. Mead

This letter refers to Charles' declamation on the following page.

DECLAMATION

American Independence - the end not yet

America's history is eventful with scenes of efforts for liberty.

It owes its foundation in the effort of the Pilgrim Father to throw off the yoke of religious tyranny, and found a colony where conscience could act unfettered.

Years rolled on, and the infant colony planted 'mid a thousand opposing circumstances flourished with an astonishing swiftness. England's ruler, through a false consciousness of his power thought to tax and oppress America - the daughter now grown stronger than the mother spurned the insult to her rights, cast in the dust the galling yoke and became a child of freedom.

Thus far America has conquered tyranny and oppression, but "the end is not yet;" in the South held in slavery's galling chains, owned, worked, recognized, and treated as cattle are found mortals of a different color.

Think you that the spirit of - liberty is dead in the hearts of Afric's sons? That the all potent might which has burst the iron bands of oppression through all the ages of the world, which has hurled down thrones and kings never to rise again, and has changed the destiny of the mightiest empires on the Globe, - think you that that spark is extinguished in the heart of the Black? Far from it, it lies there as strong as it ever did in our forefather's hearts, and were it not made dormant by the oppression of mind and soul, it would kindle and blaze with such a fierce wrath as would drive forever from America's shores all traces of so deep a crime as that of slavery.

We may rest in oblivion, but the growing feeling for Afric's sons, majority, and right will ere long wash out this blackest stain that ever blotted the fair pages of our country's history.

October 21st., 1860

DECLAMATION

Discipline Through Conflict

Nought is so conducive to success in all battles of mind or matter as Discipline through Conflict.

We can picture to ourselves two opposing armies, moving on to battle in all the splendor, facination, and power of war; equal in every way except in dicipline. One has been under the long drill, and has all the manoeuvres learned, each man is under the control of his superior; the other though not lacking in bravery is undisciplined. They move on to combat, those two solid phalanxes of destruction the disciplined with a steady swiftness; the other with a hurrying impetuosity. Their solid fronts blaze, the earth trembles at the discharge of leaden death, their ranks open and again does nature shudder, men are piled in death; closer draw the fighting armies, and at the most critical moment when a complicated [?] is made, the undisciplined army, perplexed and fearful that all is lost, fly and so are completely routed and destroyed.

Xerxe's army, one of the largest and most brilliant in history, failed in the conquest of Greece, from lack of discipline.

Life is one great battle, and he whose mind is well disciplined need not fear defeat.

The man whose faculties are equally and highly developed, and are under his perfect control moves steadily and smoothly on in life. His mind is, as it were, on springs; each obstacle however great strengthens it and makes it more easily recover from the shock. The battle of life to him is one continued chain of glorious victories, nothing can give but momentary sadness, for his great mind and heart o'retops them all; higher and higher does his great spirit rise till at last it soars as far above the common level of men, as the eagle's flight is above that of the swallows.

Shall we be content to sit in ignoble ease, to live on in simple ignorance, our minds a blotted mirror on reflecting nothing; allow ourselves to "dwell far down the scale of obscurity," and our names to be "writ - in water" or shall we store our minds with rich knowledge, discipline each noble faculty, rise to the "heights of our true destiny," - to a life of happiness and good.

Dec. 30th., 1860.

After a rain, Saturday afternoon, April 13th, 1861

The clouds, cupbearers to Queen Earth have poured down a draught of clear crystal rain drops to quench her thirst. The draught has been more potent for change than any fury quaffed by other monarchs.

The young spears of grass that have before hardly dared to be seen have after this warm rain raised up their heads and smile with gladness on the sweet clouds. The buds on the trees open their tiny mouths in thankfulness. The distant mountains stand forth in a clearer, stronger color; and all nature has put on a fresher aspect that gladdens the eye and gives new beauty to this too little prized globe. Dame nature looks decidedly better for having her face washed.

The black clouds are hurrying away. Their mission is done. Their element was closed and they float through the clear upper atmosphere seeming to glory in the past conflict, and march off much as a proud victorious army leaves the scene of conflict. But the clouds can exult in the feeling that the to them dead rain drops will before long return again to aid in other scenes. Yonder the clouds are breaking up and the bright rays of the dying sun shine on the clear blue sky and tinge the pure white clouds with a bright glorious light.

The Storm King has marshaled his few remaining...[page torn out]

[Sol is dying]

Sol is dying in his gorgeous bed of fire. For in the east a huge mass of light colored clouds stand out distinctly from the rest. It is composed of light beautifully tinted clouds that are piled in a high large column above the rest - reaching far into the blue sky. May not that be old Vulcan's palace where he forges his thunderballs. For see how a soft warm light bursts through its sides as though he were lighting up his furnace. The light grows brighter and from the top a bright crimson cloud of fire rolls off to the far east.

Imagination is thick with scenes of beauty within that secret castle. Who knows what wonderful alchemistic process may not be going on there.

One minute and the spectacle has vanished. "Oh! twas grandly glorious."

May 14th, 1861, Evening

Clouds June 30th 1861 8 P.M.

Earth has just been drenched with a heavy rain. The swiftly passing winds that bore it have swept on to the South. There is a strange commotion in the clouds above. We may call them the rear guard. Losing sight of the main army of clouds they are eagerly searching for it, moving swiftly on in the direction it has taken. The lighter clouds, with their beautiful frail shapes are sweeping even hill and mountain, kissing the grasses and lovingly clasping around every eminence. Ah! see there, the Wind King has roused himself up in the high center and the light clouds scatter off in their currents through the air. Fast the clouds are moving on, swiftly come the clouds from the North, darkening the skies with that peculiar gloomy effect when one vast massive sheet of dark vapor stretches to every horizon. A strange feeling takes possession of the mind at this grand, but depressing spectacle. The lower clouds are formed into the most fantastic shapes. Far in the East a beautiful cavern opens below the dark clouds above. Light airy shapes dance around its entrance and farther in wierd forms tell of its mystic beauty. The tempest hand is removing the wide canopy. Occasional breaks are seen in the North. Now the dark pageant has passed far to the South. Through two sets of clouds we can see the third tinged with pink floating in the blue azure.

My Childhood's Home

Clearly on my mind's eye rises that picture of bygone years. For when heart has been interested in anything, that period is stamped in strong, deep and faithful characters on memory's tablet.

Our old wood colored house, with a front two stories high and a part facing west, and a back one story part running east. On the west of the house was "front yard" filled with locust trees and roses where with my younger brother I often frolicked on the grass. On the S.W. corner of this yard stood a tall tamarack its dry branches waving with a rusty harsh sound in the breeze. Under this tree, we had often resorted for from it I had an extended and pleasant prospect. Besides, we were very well out of the way and could do as we pleased. Our young minds scorned control and we were happiest when we could roam out of sight and revel in the rich unalloyed pleasures of childhood.

On the S. of the back part was a "stoop" covered on the side & roof with a thick growth of vine, that made it in summer a cool, pleasant retreat and here we had almost absolute sway. We used to perform our youthful gymnastics on the railing & among the vines. At one end of this was a back buttery over which we have often chased the cat & which was the storehouse of our fish poles.



Clouds pass over the West Mountains as seen from the yard of the old Mead home on Clarendon Avenue.

From this stoop, stepped ground sloped for about twenty rods down to a little brook that crooked along the side of a hill & then ran chattering over its pebbly bed through the grass to the river. Wonderful to us, exploits occurred here. Often have we pulled with an exultant shout some ill fated little dace or shiner from his watery home & hurled him with such force on the ground that knocked forever all breath from his little scaly body. And sometimes I have looked with compassion on the poor little fellows with tears in their eyes as they have lain floundering in agony on the grass, but soon that feeling would depart in the hope of another like victory. My brother used to fish much of the time. He would lie for hours on a little plank bridge in the meadow, fishing through the cracks of the boards, or sit on the projecting beam of the bridge on the road and when the frolicky nibbler was caught you could have heard his exultant shout half a mile, "I have caught a fish." And even when none were caught, he would tell the number of "bites" & "nibbles" & how near a "big old fellow" came & then wagged his tail and swam away. Clams were thick in some parts of the stream & we used often to cut elders on the bank & catch them throwing them high in the air. Just on the other side of the brook, which we could jump in the narrow places, were our butternut trees, one of our banks where we drew rich dividends nearly every fall.

[The grass]

The grass that had almost determined to go to sleep for a year has woken up and the green spears glisten with life as they nod and jostle against each other. The many colored foliage of autumn shines like a gorgeous garment. The dust of decaying nature has been chased away.

Sunset, December 22nd, 1861

Earth looks like some vast monster reposing in a century of sleep. Its surface has a dull, lifeless look, spotted with the dark woods, and brown earth in varying forms.

The snow topped mountains are just tipped with light by the departing sun. From the horizon where the sun has just sunk from sight, columnar masses of clouds, radiate in regular order far into the sky. Me thinks they are the pillars that have upborne the day but now wavering blackened and broken in places, they are moving slowly but regularly as in a funeral march toward the east - there to meet the "Day God" and to again bear him company.

The snow crested mountains change their color from white to red, and then to a dark white. The clouds guided no longer by even the faint light of this monarch are broken and scattered, and they wander with no guidance or control through the dark heavens, seeming to hate black night - yet - they cannot escape her, and are sadly waiting for returning day.

Walking in a Snowy Storm

One's foot sinks softly into the feathery snow while with every footstep the light snow is thrown forward in "linking crescents" white and beautiful. The falling snow makes all around seem magical and one seems to live in an enchanted country.

Morning Breaking Free in the Winter February 5th

There is a faint flush in the east that fortells the ushering in of the Day God. That blush slowly brightens, so slow that you cannot perceive the increase except by comparing it with what it was some moments before. The eye cannot trace the brush as it paints the glowing color against the far sky. It is shaded down to the clear blue of the sky with the nicest exactness. Now it gleams across the mountains gilding their tips in golden light. Slowly the light grows till it flashes through the valleys. Where I am it shines for tens of miles through the "green hills of Vt." The high knolls are gleaming with the bright light, and each hollow beyond is resting in dark relief from the hills of light. The light increases till hill and valley are clothed with this radiating splendor. All things far and near stand out in bold clear distinctness. The atmosphere is life giving. Every object is revelling in the "glorious sunshine" of a winter morning.

[Snow] February 28th, 1862, 3 o'clock P.M.

It is snowing. The light beautiful flakes made perfectly geometrical, and of many forms all beautiful, are describing their varied courses through the clear atmosphere of a winter afternoon.

When we think that these falling flakes fill the air over a mile in height. That the work of their strange formation is going on while they are descending. That the wind drives these crystals in crooked curves through the air, and all this extends over a wide tract of country making it like a gem. It is indeed a wonderful and a beautiful creation.

Perfect I have no doubt it is in every part. That mixed mass of falling snow weaves with perfect regularity a garment for Mother Earth, aye a double garment for when it lies on her breast it is in a more tangible form. Yet the course of those flaky crystals through the air are easily woven by fancy into a garment of the most beautiful kind.

Scene from Col. Pond's

High above low marsh and stagnant atmosphere, I stand where the pure air sweeps with invigorating breath among the grand old mountains of Vt. Where the mind expands, and pure strong thoughts fill one's mind as free and lifelike as the air that sweeps among these Green Mountains. In one direction the land slopes irregularly down to a clear stream, now imprisoned by winter's stern hand. It is in a hollow filled with trees among which are scattered evergreens, whose boughs



E. PURDY

The scene from Col. Pond's (now Traverse's) is much the same today as it was when described by Charles almost 140 years ago.

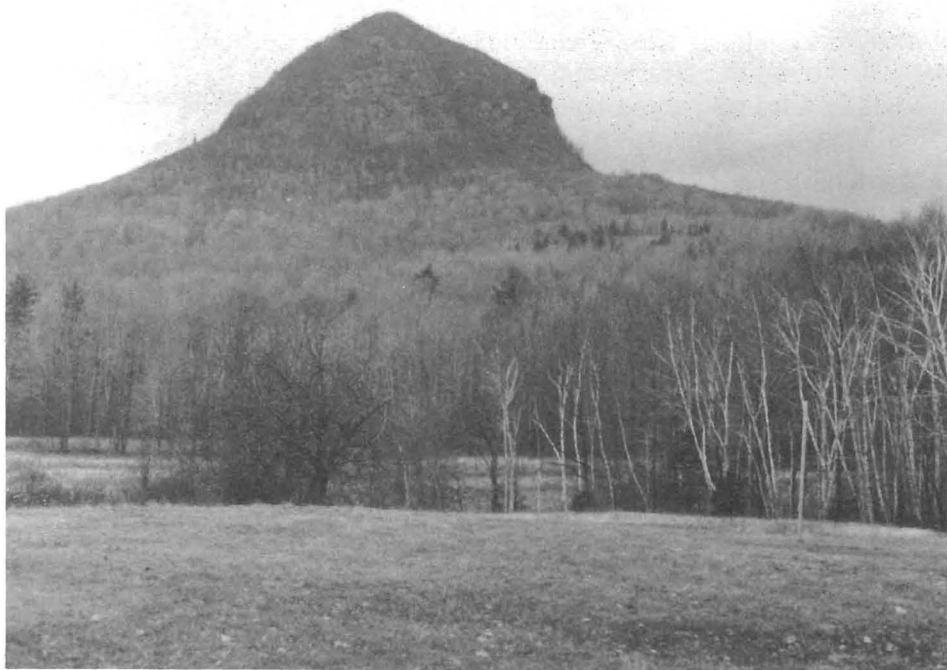
are covered most beautifully with snow. Each tree has different forms, pyramids of green covered with snow. If you descend into the twisted course of that stream you will find strange scenes of beauty, so fine that they have arrested the eye of the painter, and he had vainly attempted to borrow from them their beautiful forms. Beyond there the land rises slowly and with variety till in the distance the bare hills rise white with snow against the horizon.

In another direction far in the valley is a small village hardly distinguishable in the waste of snow. The cars are sliding noiselessly across the valley, the smoke of the steam pipes quickly blending with the snow.

Beyond the mountains rise the woods notched in various shapes. The woodcutters have formed the crowning beauty of the mountains. Back of me is old Bird's Eye, his rocky top and sides rising far towards the skies - the grandest object that meets the eye.

A fine snow is falling that mellows the whole prospect, and makes all a scene half reality and half a creation of the coldest and richest imagination.

Stand where you will and gaze in that direction yon. May you see new and lively beauties. One seems to live in an enchanted world.³



E. PURDY

"Old Bird's Eye, his rocky top and sides rising far towards the skies - the grandest object that meets the eye."

³David Streator Pond, *A Genealogical Record of Samuel Pond & His Descendants* (New London, Ohio: Geo. W. Runyan, 1875), p. 69. Philip Pond (1796 - 1873) was the son of Major Asahel Pond. He was a farmer in Castleton, Vt., and a Colonel in the state militia.

Postscript

Sadly, Charles' "enchanted world" was not destined to last. In the fall of 1862 he and brother Eugene left to serve in the Civil War. However, Charles found time to write and record his military experiences. One of his diaries has been given to the Rutland Historical Society and will be the subject of a forthcoming Quarterly.

The West Rutland Lyceum

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A. HINGHEY

The little brook, where Charles and Eugene played, still runs by the site of their boyhood home.

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